

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-7 (Canceled)

8 (Currently Amended): A strut positioning system for a foldable ladder configured for installation in an opening defined between one floor or space and another floor or space, the opening having a distal side to which a ladder is rotatably attached, a proximal side to which an opening or closing torque is applied to open or close the foldable ladder, and a first and a second lateral side, the strut positioning system comprising:

at least one strut having a proximal end and a distal end;

a track configured for mounting in a fixed position relative to and along one of the first lateral side and the second lateral side of the opening defined between one floor or space and another floor or space;

a rack plate comprising gear teeth matingly engaging corresponding pinion gear teeth and comprising a connector ~~for~~ connecting to said proximal end of said strut, said rack plate sliding translating within said track from a first position to a second position, wherein the first position corresponds to a non-compressed state of said strut and said second position corresponds to a compressed state of said strut;

a locking device locking said rack plate in said second position;

a pinion gear comprising teeth matingly engaging corresponding rack plate gear teeth and comprising a torque application member matingly engaging a torque application tool, said pinion gear being rotatably mounted in a fixed position within said track;

wherein, upon connection of said distal end of said strut to one of a ladder and a link member attached to a ladder and compression of said strut by application of a torque to said pinion gear, said rack plate is locked in said second position.

9 (Original): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 8, wherein said track comprises at least one landing positioned between said first position and said second position, said landing configured to prevent reverse translation of said rack plate in a direction toward said first position past said landing under a bias of said strut, and wherein said strut comprises at least one of a gas strut, a hydraulic strut, and a spring strut.

10 (Original): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 9, wherein said landing comprises a tab and wherein said rack plate comprises a stop member adapted to permit, in combination with said tab, movement of said rack plate over said tab only in a direction from the first position toward the second position.

11 (Original): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 10, wherein said stop member comprises a ratchet resiliently mounted on said rack plate.

12 (Original): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 11, wherein said stop member ratchet is resiliently mounted on said rack plate by a spring plate.

13 (Previously Presented): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 11, wherein said landing comprises an opening disposed on a side of the tab closer to the second position than the first position, and wherein said ratchet is configured to engage both said tab and the opening.

14 (Previously Presented): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 8, further comprising:

a second track configured for mounting in a fixed position relative to and along another one of the first lateral side and the second lateral side of the opening defined between one floor or space and another floor or space;

a second rack plate comprising gear teeth configured to matingly engage corresponding pinion gear teeth and comprising a connector for connecting to said proximal end of a second strut, said second rack plate being configured for translational movement within said second track from a first position to a second position, wherein the first position corresponds to a non-compressed state of said second strut and said second position corresponds to a compressed state of said second strut;

a second locking device configured to lock said second rack plate in said second position;

a second pinion gear comprising teeth configured to matingly engage corresponding second rack plate gear teeth and comprising a torque application member configured to matingly engage a torque application tool, said second pinion gear being configured to be rotatably mounted in a fixed position on the lateral side of the opening within said second track.

15 (Currently Amended): A strut positioning system for a foldable ladder configured for installation in an opening defined between one floor or space and another floor or space, the opening having a distal side to which a ladder is rotatably attached, a proximal side to which an opening or closing torque is applied to open or close the foldable ladder, and a first and a second lateral side, the strut positioning system comprising:

at least one strut having a proximal end and a distal end;

a track configured for mounting in a fixed position relative to and along one of the first lateral side and the second lateral side of the opening defined between one floor or space and another floor or space;

a slide plate connected to the proximal end of said strut and sliding translating within said track from a first position to a second position, wherein the first position corresponds to a non-compressed state of said strut and said second position corresponds to a compressed state of said strut;

a locking member locking said slide plate in said second position; wherein, upon connection of said distal end of said strut to one of a ladder and a link member attached to a ladder and compression of said strut, said slide plate is locked in said second position by said locking member, and said track comprises a plurality of landings disposed between said first position and said second position, said landings preventing reverse translation of said slide plate in a direction toward said first position past said landing under a bias of said strut.

16 (Previously Presented): A strut positioning system in accord with claim 15, wherein said strut comprising at least one of a gas strut, a hydraulic strut, and a spring strut.

17-23 (Canceled)